

**MEDICAL HISTORY-TAKING**—Ian Stevenson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Chairman, Department of Neurology and Psychiatry, University of Virginia School of Medicine. Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., Medical Division of Harper & Brothers, 49 East 33rd Street, New York 16, N. Y., 1960. 273 pages, \$6.50.

Although this book was designed for medical students it could be read with profit by many young physicians and some older ones. Dr. Stevenson deals with medical history-taking from three aspects. The first of these has to do with the physician-patient relationship and the process of the medical interview, that is, what it is that goes on between patient and physician in the interview. The next section of the book deals with the components of the history, and covers its various headings and the kinds of information that ought to be obtained in each of the headings of the medical history. The third and longest part of the book has to do with the technique of history taking and deals with the technical problems of guiding the interview, helping patients to talk freely, common problems in history taking techniques and various difficulties or special problems in interviewing patients. Textual descriptions and explanations are heavily interspersed with examples of good and bad techniques.

This is an exhaustive book, covering all aspects of history-taking in a fair amount of detail. On the one hand, this makes it more useful, since it covers the subject rather completely. On the other hand, for medical students its very completeness may tend to give them some feeling of being overwhelmed by a process whose complexity is frightening, as they approach their initial medical interviewing. For the physician in practice, the book's exhaustiveness may again pose a problem, since the busy physician may balk at reading so detailed a book on a subject he probably feels he is already amply competent in. In spite of this, it would probably be worth his time. Though he is probably familiar with most of the material covered by the book, this reviewer's observation of interviews conducted on rounds by fairly experienced physicians has conveyed to him the awareness that many common errors are made even by the experienced.

Dr. Stevenson is a psychiatrist. Although his book deals with medical history-taking it is clearly written from the point of view of a psychiatrist, with a fair amount of weighting of material pertinent to the psychological aspects of illness, both psychiatric and structural. This point is mentioned here not because the book is less applicable to medical history taking for this reason; but really because a casual glance might imply that it is primarily for the physician interviewing a patient with "functional" disease.

All in all, this is a book which can unhesitatingly be recommended for medical students and which might well be made a part of their required reading.

D. A. SCHWARTZ, M.D.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF NERVE BLOCKING**—Vincent J. Collins, M.S., M.D., Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, New York University Medical Center and Anesthesiologist, Bellevue Hospital Center. With the Assistance of Emery Andrew Rovenstine, M.D., Professor of Anesthesiology and Chairman of Department of Anesthesiology, New York University Medical Center and Director Division of Anesthesia, Bellevue Hospital Center. Lea & Febiger, South Washington Square, Philadelphia 6, Pa., 1960. 354 pages, \$9.50.

In this comparatively small volume the author presents the techniques and experiences of the Nerve Block Clinic of Bellevue Hospital. In carrying out his task Dr. Collins offers a considerable amount of information in a somewhat tabulated form.

The title is misleading inasmuch as considerable wordage is devoted not only to nerve block methods but to other

diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of pain problems. It is in this latter approach that this book leaves much to be desired.

The reviewer does not take issue with the author's ability to block nerves with the various chemical agents but, rather, with the indications for some of these techniques. For example, in discussing gasserian ganglion block he states that in advancing the needle through the foramen ovale the "subdural space" may be entered and cerebrospinal fluid obtained. Furthermore, it is stated that the needle may penetrate the brain substance but no harm occurs. No mention is made of the multiple and permanent nerve palsies that result from the inadvertent injection of alcohol into the subarachnoid space.

In the discussion of trigeminal branch blocking the author refers to injection of "the anesthetic solution" and fails to differentiate between the relatively innocuous anesthetic solutions and more destructive ethyl alcohol. If alcohol was used in the recommended volumes serious complications could ensue.

Alcohol block is recommended as one form of treatment for glossopharyngeal neuralgia. This procedure is not justified because of the danger of paralyzing the vagus and accessory nerves and the sympathetic branch which lie in close proximity.

Posterior rhizotomy, chordotomy and lobotomy are mentioned as surgical techniques used to relieve postherpetic neuralgia. Experienced neurosurgeons do not use these ineffective methods.

In many instances the nerve block techniques are insufficiently detailed to be of value to the novice. Experienced anesthesiologists would prefer the more standard reference works on the subject. There are many inaccuracies in the spelling of proper names and anatomical terms and in some definitions (torticollis is described as "pain in the neck"). Finally, the grammatical construction leaves much to be desired. This reviewer finds it difficult to recommend this book.

ROBERT H. PUDENZ, M.D.

\* \* \*

**THE HAND—A MANUAL AND ATLAS FOR THE GENERAL SURGEON**—Henry C. Marble, M.D., F.A.C.S., Consulting Surgeon to the Massachusetts General Hospital. W. B. Saunders Company, West Washington Square, Philadelphia 5, Pa., 1960. 207 pages, \$7.00.

The author of this small text has had a world of experience over many years in dealing with injuries of the hand. He has always been active in the teaching of medical students and house officers. Now, as a senior in the field of hand surgery, he has reviewed and sifted as it were, his experiences to record in this text the principles and procedures he considers time proven.

The book covers anatomy, applied physiology, open and closed injuries, infections and tumors of the hand, along with points on history-taking, recording, and splinting. Special emphasis is given to the principles of primary care, a thesis which can never be overemphasized. The illustrations are all line drawings in type and thus depict diagrammatically and well the particular point being emphasized. This type of illustrating in many ways is far superior, from a teaching standpoint, to multiple photographs of individual cases.

Other specialists in the field would find a few minor points for disagreement or discussion which is only natural, but for students, house officers, and those in practice who have occasion to treat hand injuries this book is a firm, first stepping stone to the understanding of the problems involved.

LOT D. HOWARD, JR., M.D.